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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses issues related to school location, staff turnover, and educational improvement through community involvement. A study involving second-year teachers in Australia indicates that teacher satisfaction was related to satisfying relationships with fellow staff and with students who were cooperative and enthusiastic about learning. The geographic preference of teachers for appointments played a relatively minor part in the satisfaction of teachers in their second year, but seemed to play a major part in their long term sense of satisfaction. Teacher preferences indicate that there will always be a high turnover rate and a large proportion of less experienced teachers in difficult-to-staff schools. Research has shown a negative relationship between teacher turnover rates and pupil achievement and effects upon student self-concept. Among the 27 reasons teachers gave for remaining in school, acceptance by the community was prominent on the list for both primary and secondary teachers. Effective school councils could make a significant contribution to the adjustment and stability of staff. Teacher induction could provide an early link with the local community and make a profound difference to length of stay. Another measure is to select new recruits and train them specifically for the locations that are hard to staff. Greater staff stability must be achieved by the voluntary preference of teachers to stay longer, induced by the satisfaction they can attain through school and community. (LP)

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Teacher Satisfaction and Community Action: Improving Education in Rural and Remote Schools

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Abstract

The current concern to make schools more effective has produced major structural and administrative changes in Australian education. In arguing that the heart of educational improvement has to do with the quality of the interaction of teacher and pupils, this paper focuses upon the way the community can contribute positively to better schooling.

Based on the authors' recent research into teacher satisfaction and staff turnover in locations that are difficult-to-staff, the paper argues that the local community is a great untapped resource for school improvement. An increased sense of local ownership of schools and a direct community input into teacher induction are two ways that parents can help raise teacher satisfaction and so enhance the quality of education. The wider community, however, has an important part to play because of the considerable disadvantage faced by schools in less favoured locations. Long-term policy initiatives are required to reduce excessive turnover and to strengthen education when schools are difficult-to-staff and especially if the local community lacks the capacity to take advantage of greater local participation in decision making.

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There is an implicit asumption in much writing about rural education that identifies the essential task for the rural educator as one of providing education for rural students that is 'as good as' that provided for urban Australians. Indeed, many would argue that the models that inform educational provision in Australia were those developed in urban settings and that the continuing challenge for rural educators has been to conscientiously ignore the differences in the environments that confront them in order to remain loyal to the models. The obvious danger in this approach is that is it is becoming increasingly hard to sustain the myth that urban schools are universally sucessful, or that those which are successful can attribute their success to their

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location. Clearly, many urban schools are, as Jonathon Sher suggests, 'dysfunctional and deeply troubled institutions' of which he may rightly ask 'Who today could argue, with a straight face, that urban education is such a stunning success that it deserves to be emulated throughout the nation's small towns and rural areas?' (Sher, 1991).

For these sorts of reasons a new focus has entered the debate about questions of equity in educational provision. Rather than seeking equal provision amongst schools and educational service providers, this approach suggests that the goal should be that of ensuring that the highest *quality* education is achieved regardless of geography, socioeconomic status of the learners or the vicissitudes of the national economy. The goal is ordinary enough — it merely asserts that all learners are of equal value and that if the nation is to earn international respect as a developed democracy and to meet its national objectives then only the highest quality educational provision is appropriate to each learner. What this perspective does force us to confront, however, is that to achieve that goal in a sparsely settled and geographically diverse nation such as ours may require some very extraordinary approaches.— in Jonathon Sher's words 'ordinary education via extraordinary means' (Sher, 1991). Australian education has developed a strong tradition in this area — School of the Air is a prime example — but there is a need to ensure that contemporary developments are similarly daring, creative and appropriate.

Some recent publications have been useful in underscoring the set of components that contributes to quality in schooling. In the extensive **Central Schools Project** researchers at Charles Sturt University explored at some depth factors which were associated with the strongly positive perception of Central schools by pupils, parents and teachers. Most important amongst these was the positive nature of the various relationships that were developed between participants in the educational enterprise at the schools — between students and teachers, teachers and teachers, teachers and parents, students and students, etc. (Sinclair, et al. 1989). The crucial contribution of these relationships to 'curriculum' (defined as the shaping of understandings that occurs in each individual learner's head under the influence of the formal and informal learning program) is emphasised by Squires and Sinclair (1991:35,36) who point out that 'There is an impressive consensus amongst educators that, for the most part, where relationships between role encumbents that directly relate to a student's learning are sound, that is, characterised by warmth, mutual respect, a willingness to listen, an openness to ideas, and so on, then learning is likely to be enhanced. A view of curriculum that attempts to elucidate something of its quality might therefore encompass the quality of the relationships in the school'

A crucial problem for the community and its representatives, e.g. politicians, leaders of parents' bodies, is to determine the extent to which they can really make a difference. The teacher is given responsibility for a class, the door is closed and few can know precisely what goes on in that classroom. Teaching has been described as the second most private activity adults engage in! How can the community have a beneficial influence on the classroom interchange of teacher and pupil?

This paper will argue that the community can have a profound impact on the quality of education. It will present findings from some of the authors' recent research on teachers'

careers and educational quality (Hatton, Watson, Squires and Soliman, 1991; Watson, Hatton, Squires and Soliman, 1991).

A major hurdle for school improvement is the high staff turnover in newer suburbs of major cities and in remote rural locations. Teachers prefer appointments in what are perceived to be the more congenial locations to live. They are reluctant to go to many places or to stay for long in such difficult-to-staff places if they do go. And difficult-to-staff schools do not form an insignificant proportion of the total. In NSW, for example, some 40%-45% of students are found at schools in such locations (Metropolitan West and South West and rural inland). This paper will address issues related to school location, staff turnover and educational improvement. Firstly, the nature of good teaching and the basis of teacher satisfaction will be considered. Secondly, the geographical preferences of teachers, the harmful effects of staff instability and the means to increase stability will be discussed. Thirdly, implications of these findings for school and community will be presented.

Good teaching and teacher satisfaction

Like parenting, teaching is a hard job to do well. Good teaching cannot be reduced to simple terms that will operate as a recipe for its improvement. Better skills and approaches cannot be forced on teachers. A teacher can go through the motions of meeting externally imposed requirements but still be teaching very badly. Good teaching depends ultimately on the commitment of the teacher. This is what makes teaching a profession. Furthermore, good teaching is a marathon not a sprint. It requires effort each day for weeks and months to produce a result. The difference between good teaching and ordinary teaching is a subtle one that is not likely to be discerned by the casual observer. As John Goodlad (1984), the leading American researcher in this field points out, good classrooms are different in degree, not in kind. They have more of the qualities that matter: a show of teacher concern, an absence of favouritism, appropriate task difficulty and a good measure of peer esteem. All these add up to create a positive classroom climate. The teacher must care and be seen to care. Good teaching builds bridges to individuals.

The persistent work needed to create teaching excellence is more likely to be produced by a teacher who is high in satisfaction. Satisfaction is the source of motivation to continue to do the many routine but necessary tasks that are required for good teaching. This includes the careful marking of student work, detailed record keeping to monitor progress, thoughtful planning of curriculum and thorough preparation of lessons (Watson, Hatton, Squires, Soliman, 1991). A reasonably satisfied teaching staff is a critical component in any attempt at school improvement. While there are other important factors - both structural and individual - schools are not likely to be improved if there is pervasive dissatisfaction amongst the teaching staff.

It should not, however, be necessary to argue that we ought to provide satisfying work circumstances for teachers. The importance of worker satisfaction has in recent years been

widely recognised in industry where there have been major changes to promote more agreeable working conditions. If increased worker satisfaction is a major contributor to greater industrial output, how much more important is a satisfied workforce when the output is the education of the next generation? Teachers, like other workers, are entitled to as satisfying a workplace as can be provided.

The difficulty of finding enough teachers and the high turnover of teachers in some areas gives a particular urgency to the consideration of teacher satisfaction. If teaching is to appeal to young graduates, it needs to be seen as a satisfying human activity. Many young people say the most important consideration in choosing a line of work is the need to obtain satisfaction. Satisfied workers are less likely than dissatisfied ones to seek other employment. Strenuous efforts to recruit new teachers for positions that cannot be filled make little sense without equally strenuous efforts to hold those who have been recruited by ensuring they are content with their work. The relatively low salary levels of teachers and the difficulty of matching the financial inducements of private industry makes it the more critical to enhance the appeal of teaching as a desirable profession by providing work circumstances that are as satisfying as possible.

What are the Sources of Teacher Satisfaction?

While wages have some importance (teachers need to receive a fair wage by comparison with similarly trained professionals), teachers have deeper sources of motivation which must be understood and tapped. The research of Watson, Hatton Squires and Soliman with second year teachers in government schools approached satisfaction in two ways. The first was asking teachers, in an open ended response, to give reasons for their level of satisfaction and the second was relating teacher characteristics to their satisfaction level. (All government school teachers in their second year of service were surveyed. A 79% response rate to our questionnaire produced 611 primary subjects and 711 secondary subjects.)

Teachers' Reasons

The central source of teacher satisfaction was found to lie in the human relationships formed at the work place (Table 1). It is the personal and the local that matters most. Most prominent of these was relationships with fellow staff. Mostly they were friendly and supportive, giving young teachers a sense of belonging in the profession. One whose satisfaction was fairly high, said, 'I feel I have become a valued member of staff. I gauge this from the reactions of colleagues and superiors'. Sometimes, however, fellow staff were unsupportive, conferring no recognition. One explained her very low level of satisfaction, 'My only reason is the lack of support, communication and supervision I am receiving from the senior executive'.

TABLE 1: Reasons for Teacher Satisfaction

Response Categories	Positive			Negative		
	Descriptors	Primary n = 580	Sec. n = 678	Descriptors	Primary n = 580	Sec. n = 678
Staff Relations	good, friendly, supportive	37%	40%	poor, lack of support, recognition	15%	12%
Pupil Qualities	cooperative, enthusiastic, achievement evident	34%	31%	uncooperative, difficult, poor achievement, lack of respect	8%	12%
Personal Achievement	good, work competence meeting the challenge	25%	23%	poor, stagnation, not challenging, too demanding, high stress	15%	12%
School Tone	good climate, organisation, discipline, resources	16%	22%	poor climate, administration, discipline, resources	8%	12%
Geographic Location	pleasant environment / climate, not isolated	8%	8%	harsh climate / environment, isolated, much travel	11%	12%
Community Support	high interest, esteem, relationships good, values match those of school	9%	3%	little interest, esteem, recognition, value mismatch with school	7%	5%
The System	helpful, secure, good pay, rewards	2%	1%	unhelpful, no recognition, support, poor pay, career prospects	7%	9%
Private Life	good housing, social, recreational facilities	3%	5%	no housing, poor social, recreational facilities, split from partner	1%	4%

Note: This table reports answers to an open-ended question and multiple categories of response from a single respondent were common. Percentages therefore do not sum to 100.

Almost as frequently, teachers said their level of satisfaction depended on their pupils who were either co-operative and enthusiastic in regard to the learning purposes of the school or difficult and disrespectful. As one teacher very high in satisfaction put it, 'The children are my incentive and my reward.' They either make good progress which strengthens satisfaction or poor progress which weakens it. Watching children change and helping to shape that development is a major source of teacher satisfaction.

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Both the recognition of fellow staff and the response of pupils provide feedback by which teachers gauge their own personal achievement which is another important reason for satisfaction. 'Having completed a difficult probationary year I have skills and more confidence which enable me to enjoy teaching more', commented one teacher with a moderate level of satisfaction. Very low satisfaction was often attributed to the heavy demands of the job. 'The work load is incredible. I am expected to spend every minute of my time on school matters. There is no life after school.'

School tone, organisation and resources were also found to play an important part in teacher satisfaction while community support, geographic location and the system (Departmental structures and requirements) play smaller parts in overall teacher satisfaction. It is noteworthy that relationships with the community do not figure as a source of satisfaction for a large proportion of teachers and, when it does gain a mention, it is often negative in its effect. The local community, given opportunity, could play a much more influential role in its relationships with teachers and so contribute more to the quality of education. We shall come back to this important point later. The location and the 'system' are more frequently referred to negatively than positively but are probably taken for granted when positive.

Prediction of Satisfaction

A number of interesting results emerged when teacher characteristics were correlated with level of satisfaction. (All differences reported here were significant at the .05 level). Females were more satisfied than males, the more committed were more satisfied than the less committed, those who felt well prepared by their teacher education had higher satisfaction than those who felt poorly prepared, and those who were given an induction (formal or informal) were more satisfied than those who were not. Furthermore, a formal induction was shown to be more helpful than an informal one. Travelling time to work of one hour or more, predicted lower satisfaction but the adverse effect seems to begin with 40 or 45 minutes travel (each way). The helpfulness of school equipment and teaching aids had a strong positive relationship to teacher satisfaction and availability of inservice courses were also related to higher levels of satisfaction.

Locational preferences and staff stability

The geographic preference of teachers for appointments played a relatively minor part in the satisfaction of teachers in their second year but it seems to play a major part in their long term sense of satisfaction. In the recruiting of staff, schools in different locations do not compete on a level playing field. Teachers have strong preferences for certain locations and seek to leave other areas as soon as possible. A comparison of the first location of teachers, where they would like to be next and where they hope to be in the long term, gives dramatic evidence of this point (Table 2).

In their first appointments, 82% of primary teachers were sent to areas difficult-to-staff (Sydney Metropolitan West/South West and inland). For their next appointments only 27% wish to be in these locations and in the long term only 19% wish to be in such places. A similar pattern is true for secondary teachers. This means that in the difficult-to-staff schools there will be always a high turnover of staff and a large proportion of less experienced teachers.

Table 2: First Teacher Appointments and Future Preferences

	Present	Next	Long Term
Primary (n = 611)			
Sydney city and near suburbs	12%	32%	28%
Sydney west and south west	67%	21%	14%
North and south coasts	4%	30%	43%
Tablelands and mid-west	2%	11%	10%
Inland: western,NW and Riverina	15%	6%	5%
Secondary (n = 711)			
Sydney city and near suburbs	15%	30%	25%
Sydney west and south west	48%	13%	10%
North and south coasts	8%	38%	47%
Tablelands and mid-west	6%	12%	12%
Inland: western, NW and Riverina	23%	7%	6%

Effects of Rapid Teacher Turnover

The effects on schools of rapid teacher turnover are varied and far-reaching, touching the school's administration and programmes, as well as its teachers, parents and pupils. At an administrative level, there is the high cost borne by the system in locating, transferring and settling staff each time a teacher moves. It reduces the time which principals, head teachers and other staff can give to the many other tasks that call out for their attention. The school's educational program is also likely to be adversely affected if the rate of teacher turnover is high. Good collegial relationships are harder to establish and this can affect the delivery of curriculum, the establishment of rapport with pupils, and the operation of participatory school management. Communities are affected too. Not only does high teacher turnover reduce the chances of sustaining co-operative school-community relationships, but teachers' unwillingness to stay in a community's schools may be interpreted as rejection (Hatton, Watson, Squires, Soliman, 1991). The community may become alienated, regarding teachers in general as uncommitted 'tourists', 'blow-ins', unsympathetic to local life and culture.

Of greatest importance are the effects on the pupils. Research has shown a negative relationship between teacher turnover and pupil achievement (e.g., Walberg, 1974). Even pupil self-concept can be adversely affected. The principal of a school with high staff turnover towards the end of the year complimented some third grade pupils on their good work. She said that next year, because all the teachers would want them, she wouldn't know which class to put them in. 'You won't have to worry about it, Miss, you won't be here,' one quickly responded. 'Why not?' she asked. 'Our teachers never come back after Christmas.' The high teacher turnover had not escaped the notice of some of the youngest members of the school community. 'Why?' she persisted. 'It's us kids, I suppose. 'Cause we're naughty.' They even tended to blame themselves! These effects are probably sharpened in NSW by the fact that many of the schools with high teacher turnover are in areas where socioeconomic disadvantage or geographical isolation can also adversely affect educational outcomes.

The Commonwealth Schools Commission report, **Schooling in Rural Australia** (1988), points out that these effects are particularly profound in remote rural schools where the length of time teachers remain in their appointments ranges from two to three years. The Commission argues that increasing this time 'is an essential condition for improving the quality of teaching in remote schools' (p. 156). Notwithstanding the particular demands of remote schools, it is likely that a similar effect would be felt in any school where teacher turnover is high and length of stay short, e.g., Sydney Metropolitan West.

Furthermore, experience (especially the first few years) is likely to improve the teacher's competence. A more experienced staff in general will be a more competent staff. Of course there are times when teachers should move. Too long in a school often produces professional stagnation. But in the difficult-to-fill locations we need a staying-on program for teachers. Not that there's anything wrong with first year teachers. They often bring a freshness and vigour that older teachers may have lost. But when they comprise 20% to 30% of a staff and most of the others are in the early years of teaching, the mix of experience to youth is too lean. Since the effects of rapid turnover are generally adverse and the quality of education is not likely to

be improved without greater staff continuity there is a need to ask how staffing stability can be improved.

Improving Staffing Stability

To gauge the relative importance of 27 reasons teachers give for remaining in a school, we used a multiple regression procedure which linked the strength of the response to how long teachers declare they will stay. This is a powerful technique for determining the most important reasons for staying.

Every item which appears in table 3 makes a significant difference to teachers' length of stay. The order of listing is a rank order of predictive strength of the items. The result is particularly interesting for community groups. 'Acceptance by the community' is prominent on the list for both primary and secondary teachers. For primary teachers community acceptance, accommodation and cultural facilities are the strongest predictors of length of stay. For secondary teachers the support they received from the principal and staff and levels of stress are the best predictors of length of stay but community items, quite similar to those nominated by their primary colleagues, also appear prominently in the list. For secondary teachers, a perceived lack of parental support for education has a marked negative effect on desire to stay.

Implications for school and community

The two strands of evidence which have been considered — teacher satisfaction and staff stability — need to be drawn together and their implications for community action made clear. The importance of a strong and healthy relationship between the school and the local community is evident.

Teacher Satisfaction and the Local Community

Since teacher adjustment and satisfaction depend so much on the personal and the proximal, the local community has great potential to strengthen the hand of teachers. It is notable that:

i) few teachers mention parents or the community as a source of their satisfaction (less than 6% overall) but that;

ii) acceptance by the community is a critical reason that teachers give for remaining longer in an appointment.

These two results placed side by side mean that the great untapped resource for raising satisfaction and increasing stability is the community and parents.

Table 3: Regression of Reasons for Remaining onto How Long Teachers wish to Stay

Order of entry	Teachers' Reasons for Remaining	beta	Multiple R at each step
Primary			
1.	acceptance by the community	25	31
2.	quality of accommodation	18	34
3.	community cultural facilities (music, art, etc)	-11	37
4.	level of stress	-14	38
5.	inservice opportunities	-15	39
6.	support from Principal and staff	13	41
7.	language/ethnic background of pupils	10	42
Secondary			
1.	support from Principal and staff	21	21
2.	level of stress	-18	28
3.	cultural facilities in the community (music, art, etc)	-20	32
4.	degree of personal privacy	12	36
5.	acceptance by community	11	39
6.	inservice opportunities	-15	40
7.	climate and environment	11	41
8.	value of professional contacts	09	42
9.	parental support for education	-21	43
10.	communication with parents	10	44

In the most important sense, teachers are responsible to parents for the effects of their work and they share with parents a very strong interest in the well-being (and foibles) of the children. Yet the line of responsibility from teachers to parents in the NSW system (and throughout Australia) has been and often still is, very long and indirect. We need to develop a sense of community ownership of the school. While ever parents have no say in things that matter at their local school (e.g., selection of the Principal, setting curriculum policy) a sense of community ownership of the school is unlikely to emerge. Without a clear identification of the community with the school, teachers are unlikely to develop a strong sense that they are working on the parents' behalf. This has been a major weakness of the strong centralised control of education which is being broken down now. We applaud governments for policies which devolve responsibilities to the local level while being concerned about the increased demands on staff and lack of administrative assistance which has accompanied their implementation.

The past few years have witnessed some of the greatest changes to the structure of Australian schooling that have ever occurred. The Scott Report, for example, which is the blueprint for reforming the NSW education system, is professing to turn education 'down side up.' Other states are experiencing similar restructuring. But will these changes produce better schools? Current changes offer an historic opportunity for parents and the community to be a greater source of encouragement and work satisfaction to teachers. If public schools are to be improved, there is a need to boost the level of confidence which local communities have in them and to harness the energies and talents of the people in those communities for the benefit of the education of their children. This can be done at a range of different levels from hearing individual children read, to serving on the School Council.

School Councils with significant powers could make a great contribution to the adjustment and stability of staff. For a school council to be successful, the parents and other community members must feel their contribution can make a difference beyond that which the long established parent bodies can do. Their powers need to include an input into the choice of principal and the setting of general curriculum and broad educational policy. Other responsibilities could include management and security of buildings, promoting interest in the school, and assisting in the provision of teacher accommodation. These three are current problems that do not seem capable of solution without enlisting local goodwill and action.

A further avenue for community participation is in teacher induction.

Teacher Induction

Induction refers to measures used to assist new teachers in coming to grips with the demands of the appointment. Induction may be informal (e.g., an occasional chat over coffee) or formal (e.g., a series of structured meetings). Our research found that those who were given an induction had adjusted better to the 'reality shock' of first appointment, to pupil backgrounds and to other non-teaching school responsibilities and were much more likely to be high in satisfaction. A formally planned induction was shown to be more helpful than an informal one and this ideally should be carried out by the local school staff. Assistance, however, from the

employing authority is probably necessary to encourage and support senior teachers in setting up this critical service. Only 12% of our sample received a formal induction, about 51% had an informal one and 37% had no induction whatever. What employing authority would train staff for four years largely at its own expense, then not make sufficiently thorough provision for their smooth transition into the workforce? It is hard to avoid the conclusion that lack of proper induction contributed in a major way to the reasons one in six quit teaching during their first or second year of service (Watson, Hatton, Squires and Soliman, 1991).

Both school and community orientation needs to be provided. The creation of a good fit between teacher background/preparation and the demands of the appointment is the principle upon which induction should be designed. Some teachers who live and teach in a highly familiar area will require little induction to local conditions and expectations (though they will need orientation to school related issues). Most first appointments, however, are not to familiar locations and considerable attention needs to be paid to local aspects of induction, especially for areas which are difficult to staff.

Along with school staff, local community representatives could helpfully be involved in the induction program. Typically, the inductions which have been provided have not assisted in adjustment to the local community and a carefully planned introduction to the local scene - its educational aspirations, its social/recreational facilities and to some of its leaders - could overcome this limitation.

The evidence on staff stability strongly demonstrates that community acceptance is an important element for encouraging a longer stay. A positive early link with the local community can make a profound difference to length of staff tenure as well as to teacher satisfaction and the quality of teaching. In addition to the role of the local community, the wider community has a part to play through its education policy making and politicians.

Education Policy and the Difficult-to-Staff Rural Locations

The urgency of filling vacancies in difficult-to-staff schools means that there is always a danger that policy makers will lose sight of long term initiatives needed to strengthen staff stability and to improve educational quality. As systems give greater scope for local recruitment, it is important to recognize that school areas have markedly different levels of appeal to teachers. Decentralized decision-making will make it harder for the less favoured schools to recruit and hold staff. The pattern of horizontal teacher mobility and a commitment to social equity implies that special policy consideration should be given to increasing the stability of staffing in places with high teacher turnover.

No single solution is likely to work but a combination of policy measures is called for. As well as supporting local induction and professional development of teachers, there is good reason to select new recruits and train them specifically for the locations that are hard to staff (Hatton, Watson, Squires and Soliman, 1991). If teachers cannot be trained in the area to which they are likely to go, even a practicum in that area will significantly increase their willingness to go

(Watson, Hatton, Squires and Grundy, 1987). In addition, a course as part of teacher education on the particular demands of that location is likely to be even more beneficial. For the very remote and difficult places a range of incentives for staying longer seems to be necessary. Incentives which proved to be attractive to the teachers in our research included transfer priority (a points system), provision of housing, lump sum payment on completion of an extended period of service, and greater promotional opportunities.

The turnover problems of some schools will be compounded when the opportunities that devolution provides are not met by an awakening of local initiative to the benefit of education. Rural communities are traditionally possessed of a strong community spirit and have generally learned to place a high value on education but not all have developed the confidence or the competence to take a direct role in the sorts of activities outlined in this paper. The challenge to a government policy of decentralising is whether it can provide and maintain the support structures that are required to assist communities develop the necessary competence, or indeed, whether it can maintain the capacity to act centrally to improve educational quality when local need calls for it.

Conclusion

Finally, in the decentralizing public school systems of the 90s — with local decision-making and responsiveness — there is great scope to make public education excellent. At the same time there is a grave danger that, while some schools thrive, others, lacking the parental initiative or know-how, will wither. As a recent **Sydney Morning Herald** article put it (24.7.91), the 1990s could become the decade of 'the survival of the fittest for schools'. It is therefore critical to preserve a vision and maintain a capacity to act to meet the needs of less favoured areas.

Improving the quality of schooling in rural and remote schools will not be achieved by trivial means. It calls for great political will and long term effort. Furthermore, an informed and persistent lobby is necessary to keep it on the political agenda. Greater staff stability must be achieved by the voluntary preference of teachers to stay for longer, principally induced by the quality of satisfaction they can attain through school and community. Recently there have been very successful staying-on programs for students. In places with high staff turnover there needs to be a *Staying-on Program* for teachers. This should begin in teacher education, continue by induction and inservice support and be sustained by a stronger relationship of community and school. The community can make a profound contribution to school improvement.

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